

Secretary

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528



Homeland
Security

June 9, 2009

The Honorable Bart Gordon
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Gordon:

Thank you for your March 11, 2009 letter to the President, expressing concern over the trafficking of illegal weapons, bulk cash, and narcotics across the U.S.-Mexico Border. The White House has asked me to respond. I agree with your assessment that our response to cross-border crime requires a comprehensive strategy. As Secretary of Homeland Security, I continue to work to support our state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement efforts and our Mexican counterparts in their fight against the networks of organized crime that undermine the security of our borders. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has a leading role in controlling our border and ensuring it is free from criminality and violence, and it is a priority for President Obama.

On March 24, 2009, I announced at the White House—alongside the Department of Justice and Department of State—a Southwest Border Initiative aimed at enhancing our capacity to manage the southwest border (SWB) effectively. DHS released additional details on about these enhancements on April 15, 2009. As part of this overall effort, DHS is:

- Doubling Border Enforcement Security Task Forces teams that incorporate foreign, Federal, state, and local law enforcement and intelligence officers;
- Tripling the number of DHS intelligence analysts working along the SWB;
- Increasing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement attaché staff in Mexico in support of Mexican law enforcement efforts;
- Doubling Violent Criminal Alien teams located in SWB Field Offices;
- Quadrupling the number of Border Liaison Officers working with Mexican law enforcement entities;
- Bolstering Secure Communities Biometric Identification capabilities;
- Supporting Government of Mexico efforts to incorporate biometrics into management of its border and immigration programs;
- Increasing southbound rail examinations from zero to 100 percent at all eight SWB locations;
- Enhancing the use of technology at ports of entry, including backscatter mobile x-ray;
- Increasing the number of canine units;
- Increasing engagement with state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement counterparts;
- Making available up to \$59 million in current Operation Stonegarden funding to enhance state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement operations and assets;
- Increasing the use of mobile license plate readers for southbound traffic on the SWB;

- Continuing Operation Armas Cruzadas—a DHS-led bilateral law enforcement and intelligence-sharing operation to thwart the exportation of arms from the United States into Mexico; and
- Continuing Operation Firewall—a DHS-led comprehensive law enforcement operation targeting criminal organizations involved in smuggling large quantities of U.S. currency.

Further, as part of a comprehensive effort, DHS and the Department of Justice are co-chairing an interagency effort to update the bi-annual review of the National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy. This congressionally-mandated strategy sets forth the U.S. Government's overall plan for preventing illegal drug trafficking across the U.S.-Mexico border and addressing the southbound flow of bulk cash and weapons.

On April 15, 2009, the President appointed Alan Bersin to serve as the Department's Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Special Representative for Border Affairs to lead and coordinate the Department's comprehensive efforts to address cross-border crime. Assistant Secretary Bersin has already traveled twice to Mexico to expand a number of cooperative initiatives between DHS and our Mexican counterparts. At the same time, he is looking at ways that DHS can work more effectively with our interagency partners to ensure that front line officers and agents have the resources to perform their mission of securing the SWB.

DHS, along with the Departments of State, Treasury, Justice, Defense, and others all have important roles in securing U.S. borders and enhancing our coordination with the Government of Mexico. For example, DHS plays a significant role in implementing the Mérida Initiative, which will utilize cross-agency expertise to provide \$700 million this year for equipment, training, and resources to help our Mexican counterparts realize President Calderón's stated objective of stamping out the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico. I hope that Congress will continue to fund this important initiative in 2010.

I believe the efforts outlined above, along with ongoing efforts by the Department and our operational Components, address the recommendations made in your letter. If you would like to review these programs or discuss your recommendations in greater detail, I would be happy to meet with you.

Thank you again for your letter and for your dedicated service to Tennessee and the Nation. I hope to continue to foster a close working relationship with you on this issue and other homeland security matters. Should you need additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 282-8203.

Yours very truly,



Janet Napolitano